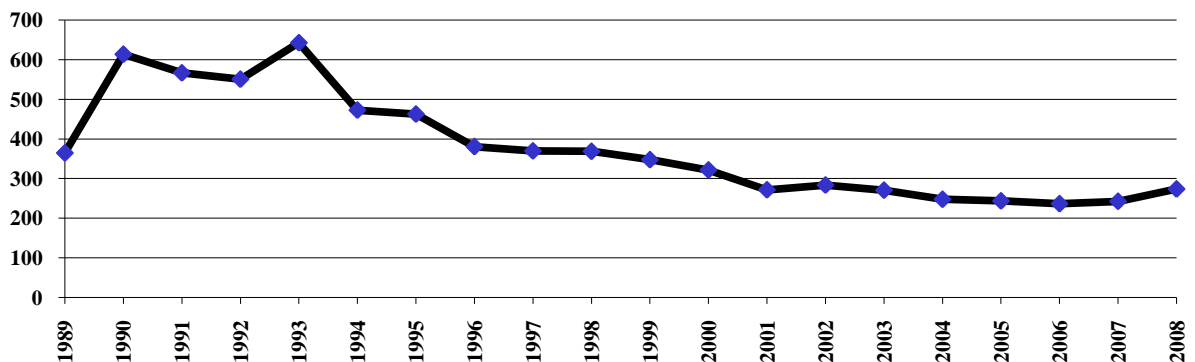


AGGRAVATED ASSAULT

Aggravated assault describes an unlawful attack by one person upon another for the purpose of inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury. This type of assault is usually accompanied by the use of a weapon or by means likely to produce death or great bodily harm. Attempts are included since it is not necessary that injury result when a gun, knife, or other weapon is used that could result in serious personal injury if the crime were successfully completed.

**Twenty Year Review:
Aggravated Assault in Cambridge, 1989-2008**



243 reported in 2007 • 274 reported in 2008

Analysis of the past twenty years shows that aggravated assault reached its peak in the early 1990's. Between 1984 and 1989, Cambridge registered about 350 incidents per year; in 1990, it suddenly jumped by 41% to an unprecedented 614 reports. It peaked at 643 in 1993 and then steadily declined for the next 10 years. Within the last five years, aggravated assaults have leveled off to an average of 249 incidents a year, a 17% decrease from the five previous years.

Assault is a violent crime that typically arises in "the heat of the moment". Unlike the crime of robbery, assault seldom involves a motivation of personal gain. Offenders in aggravated assaults will often regret the incident subsequent to its occurrence, as the offender typically knows his or her victim.

GEOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF AGGRAVATED ASSAULTS FROM 2006 TO 2008

NEIGHBORHOOD	2006	2007	2008
Area 4	42	46	45
Cambridgeport	34	38	38
North Cambridge	24	31	33
East Cambridge	19	28	31
Mid-Cambridge	24	14	26
Riverside	21	20	25
Inman/Harrington	29	33	24
West Cambridge	17	8	18
Peabody	12	8	15
Agassiz	4	4	7
Strawberry Hill	1	5	6
Cambridge Highlands	4	3	4
M.I.T. Area	5	5	2
Unknown	1	0	0
	237	243	274

*Please note that 1 incident in 2006 occurred at an unknown location and has been indicated as such on the breakdown above.

Aggravated assault is a very serious crime and is not taken lightly by the Cambridge Police. The severity of aggravated assault lies in the serious injury caused to victims, which can range from bruises to knife or gun wounds. Approximately 7% of the aggravated assaults in 2008 resulted in serious to life-threatening injuries, less than half of which involved a stabbing or shooting. Roughly 31% of the 274 incidents resulted in no injury, as the victim was merely threatened with the use of a weapon.

IN FOCUS: DOMESTIC ASSAULTS

A good portion of the fluctuation in the rate of incidents can be attributed to the frequency in which the crime is *reported* rather than the frequency of its actual occurrence. One area with a historically low reporting rate is domestic assault. As domestic violence awareness has increased over the last decade, so has the willingness of domestic violence victims to report abuse to the police. Nearly a third of the aggravated assaults in 2008 were domestic incidents. Over the past five years, the rate of domestic incidents has ranged from a quarter to a third of all reported incidents.

Despite advances made by domestic violence victim advocates in recent years, experts estimate that between 60 and 80% of domestic assaults are never reported to the police. However, lack of reporting is not unique to domestic incidents. It is very likely that factors including apathy, fear of police contact, embarrassment, and other issues lead to underreporting of various assaults involving acquaintances, gangs, and conflicts among the homeless. Due to the estimated high rate of underreporting, *assault statistics must be viewed with extreme care.*

Since domestic assaults and assaults among acquaintances dominate the percentages (aside from stranger assaults), the crime naturally registers higher in areas that have a high residential population. These neighborhoods include East Cambridge, Area 4, Cambridgeport, and North Cambridge. Domestic assaults and other domestic crimes are reviewed in the *Domestic Crimes* section of this report.

Relationships

Another way to look at aggravated assaults is to classify the relationship between the offender and the victim. Many, but not all, of the assault categorizations are based on this relationship. This list shows the relationship between the offender and the victim in the 274 aggravated assaults in 2008:

Relationship	Total	%
Stranger	89	32%
Acquaintance	54	20%
Romantic Partner	31	11%
Client/Patron	20	7%
Parent/Child	16	6%
Spouse	14	5%
Ex-Romantic Partner	12	4%
Sibling	8	3%
Co-Worker/Employee	8	3%
Schoolmate	5	2%
Neighbor	5	2%
Other Family	4	1%
Third Lover	4	1%
Teacher/Coach	3	1%
Landlord/Tenant	1	0%

NEIGHBORHOOD PATTERNS AND TRENDS OBSERVED IN 2008

The following is a synopsis of neighborhoods with concentrations of particular aggravated assault categories as well as detailed accounts of some of the most serious incidents of the year (not including domestic incidents).

- **NEIGHBORHOODS:**

- **Inman/Harrington** experienced the most notable decrease in aggravated assaults this year, declining by 27% from 33 incidents in 2007 to 24 incidents in 2008. The M.I.T. area recorded a sizeable 60% decrease as well, but this neighborhood only experiences roughly 1-2% of the assaults in Cambridge each year. **West Cambridge** sustained the most substantial increase in 2008, rising 125% from 8 incidents in 2007 to 18 incidents in 2008. **Peabody** and **Mid-Cambridge**, which experienced an 88% and 86% increase, respectively, were the other two areas that reported notable escalations in assaults.
- **Riverside** was the top area for bar and alcohol related incidents in 2008. This type of activity can be attributed to the high density of foot traffic around restaurants, bars, and nightclubs in the Mass Ave area of both Central and Harvard Squares, particularly in the nighttime.
- **North Cambridge** experienced the most juvenile/gang-related assaults in 2008 with four incidents, followed by **East Cambridge** and **Riverside**, each with three. Similar to incidents in 2005-2007, over half of the juvenile incidents citywide in 2008 involved the use of a knife or handgun.

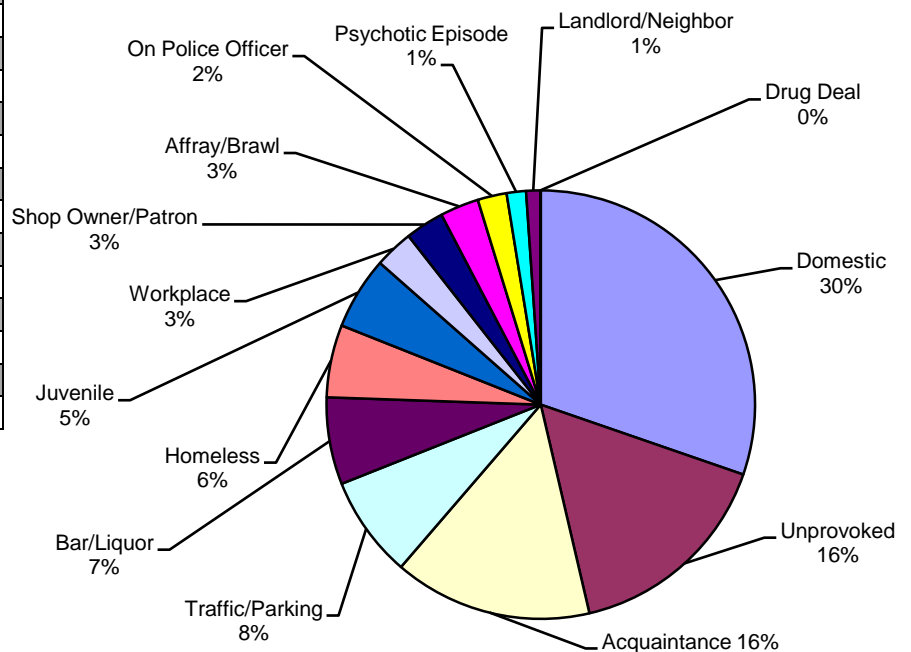
- Aggravated assault incidents involving homeless individuals in Cambridge dropped from 20 incidents in 2007 to 15 in 2008). Roughly half of these incidents took place in the **Central Square** area, where there is a large homeless population. The typical homeless incident usually involves homeless-on-homeless assaults, often among acquainted individuals.
- Unprovoked incidents were highest in **North Cambridge** (8 incidents) and **Area 4** (7 incidents). No established patterns of unprovoked assaults emerged anywhere in the City this year.
- Five of the aggravated assaults in 2008 were shooting incidents, none of which were fatal. The following examples represent some of the more serious non-fatal shootings of the year.
 - A Cambridge male was arrested after he shot another male at a house party on Cherry St in January.
 - A Cambridge teen was shot in two different incidents last year. In May, he was shot twice while in the Jefferson Park Housing Development; the suspect in that shooting was stabbed later that night in a retaliatory incident. In August, the teen was shot while walking on York St shortly after leaving the Cambridge Courthouse. Another Cambridge teen was arrested in connection with this incident.
- See page 36 for a map of all aggravated assaults in 2007 and 2008 in which a handgun was used or threatened.

Protect yourself!! Please see the Protect Yourself section starting on page 151 for tips on how you can protect against becoming a victim of assault, and what to do in case of an assault or abuse.

AGGRAVATED ASSAULT CLASSIFICATIONS

TYPE	2007	2008
Domestic	62	83
Unprovoked	44	44
Acquaintance	30	41
Traffic/Parking	17	21
Bar/Liquor	20	18
Homeless	20	15
Juvenile	17	15
Workplace	10	8
Shop Owner/Patron	3	8
Affray/Brawl	2	8
On Police Officer	7	6
Psychotic Episode	5	4
Landlord/Neighbor	3	3
Drug Deal	3	0

Classification Percent of Aggravated Assaults, 2008



SIMPLE ASSAULT

435 reported in 2007 • 416 reported in 2008

SIMPLE ASSAULT CATEGORIZATION			
Categorization	2007	2008	% Change 07-08
Domestic	191	157	-18%
Unprovoked	67	63	-6%
Acquaintance	60	62	+3%
Traffic/Parking	19	37	+95%
Workplace	11	22	+100%
Juvenile/Gang	15	18	+20%
Bar/Alcohol	20	14	-30%
Shop Owner/Patron	16	12	-25%
Police Officer	10	10	No Change
Homeless	9	9	No Change
Psychotic Episode	3	6	+100%
Landlord/Neighbor	14	5	-64%
Blitz	0	1	Inc.
Total	435	416	-4%

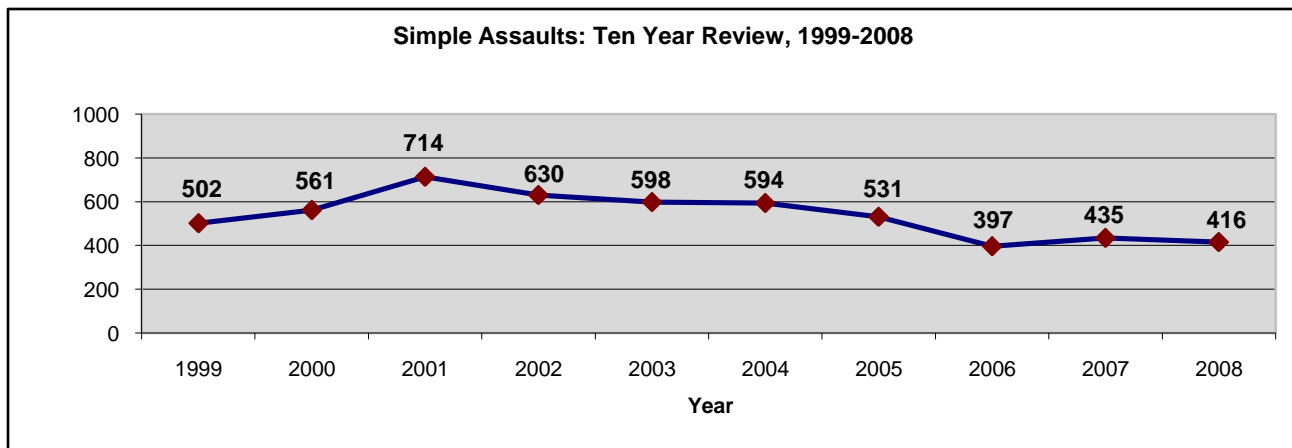
accounted for approximately 15% of the simple assaults.

Simple assaults, unlike aggravated assaults, are not scored among the Part I Crimes (Index Crimes). They do not involve the use of a dangerous weapon and do not cause serious injury. Examples of simple assault include a shove, a punch in the stomach, or a slap in the face.

On average, Cambridge reports between 400 and 600 simple assault incidents annually. During the past year, 416 simple assaults were reported to the Cambridge Police Department. This number represents a 4% decrease from the 435 incidents reported in 2007 and is 23% below the 10-year average of 538. However, because most simple assaults result in minimal or no injury, the victims and offenders may sometimes dismiss them as inconsequential. Therefore, lack of reporting is a problem in calculating exact numbers of simple assaults.

Similar to aggravated assaults, domestic incidents typically make up the highest percent of reported simple assaults. In 2008, domestic incidents accounted for 38% of the simple assaults. Unprovoked incidents and assaults among acquaintances

Cambridgeport and Area 4 reported the most simple assault activity in 2008 with 69 and 57 incidents, respectively. Bar/alcohol related incidents, homeless assaults, and assaults on police officers were mainly concentrated in the Central and Harvard Square areas. Workplace assaults were most prevalent in East Cambridge. The other incident categories broke down more evenly across neighborhoods.



WHERE ASSAULTS TAKE PLACE...

Many assaults take place in the home, particularly family, roommate, or acquaintance-related incidents. Assaults taking place on the street are the most common, as these involve domestic disputes as well as arguments that may begin in a commercial establishment and spill onto the street. Restaurant/Bar incidents are common and can be the result of intoxicated parties becoming disorderly and sometimes violent. Aggravated assaults on school grounds have not significantly increased over the past five years, basically making up between 1 and 2% of all aggravated assaults. While many juvenile simple assaults take place on school grounds, the more violent aggravated assaults take place on the street in the proximity of residential housing and parks.

AGGRAVATED ASSAULTS INVOLVING HANDGUNS, 2007-2008

